

## [President of Barre Chamber of Commerce]

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Robert Beandette

President of Barre Chamber of Commerce

"I'm not in a position to speak too liberally simply because I feel like an outsider. You see I'm from the South, I've only been in Barre for three years. To be perfectly truthful when I left the South to come here I had the impression that I was coming to a very frigid and indifferent people. But I can also say just as strongly I was never more surprised nor more pleased since coming here to [Marie?]. I found the people very sociable, and easy to get acquainted with. I have never regretted coming here to Barre.

Comparison of the North and the South? Well, that's a pretty general question. As for a 'feeling' existing between the two I will say this. That in some of the rural sections in the South there is no question but what they are still fighting the Civil War. But in your larger communities, there is no indication whatsoever of any strained feeling still existing. Relative to living conditions here and in the South, there is a very great difference as you no doubt know. The wage scale is much higher here than it is down [there?], but this is offset of course by the cost of commodities. Take for instance in Florida. Now I'm speaking of resident people. This doesn't hold true for the tourists. They can be seen coming a mile off, and it's written all over their faces. Naturally they pay. But in the case of your residents, they pay so little for foodstuffs and clothing that it just about balances the scale. Now I can buy an overcoat which will last me for three or four years without showing much wear, 2 naturally because you would wear one so seldom down there. Up here the same overcoat would last but half the same time. It's the same story in the upkeep of your home. You can heat yourself down there for about sixteen dollars a year. But here your larger income is eaten into by the cost of heating expenses.

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Disease. Although both places are naturally afflicted, I really think that there is less ill health in the South. Of course, there is much Malarin and Tape Worn disease down there. But that is all do to the carelessness of the people themselves. There is that certain class of people that just cannot be educated to the care and prevention of these various diseases. And they just don't seem to care. They're listless and irresponsible. Now you take a higher class of people and they could live in the very same districts and never become diseased. But aside from that, I think that there is more sickness up here. Head colds, nose and throat trouble, and mastoids. Down there those things are never heard of. Of course it can be attributed to the climate. With our sudden changes in temperature, dampness, and so forth this is only natural.

But looking at Barre economically, I don't think that it can be beat. With the business that granite brings to Barre in addition to its own thriving possibilities there is no question that Barre is a town with untold opportunities. Of course there are improvements to be made, and changes are being made everyday to meet with competition that is always cropping up. I would say that in the last few years that 3 Barre has made wonderful progress towards promoting itself in the granite world. The memorials that are put out here cannot be equalled in craftsmanship or quality. It's worth anybody's time just to visit one of the cemetery's around Barre and really see the works of art that men have produced from a lifeless slab of granite. And as for the manufacturers who put out these memorials I would say without hesitation that they are experts in their line. There is no one who can beat them. They are absolutely tops in their profession!

Looking at Barre from a social point of view, I don't think that it differs from any other town. You have your different classes of people who have their own way of enjoying themselves. You'll find your men who like fishing, men who enjoy following the ball team, young folks who are interested in athletics, dancing, winter sports, and so forth. But aside from a social point of view, I would not say that Barre was a typical Vermont town. Simply because it hasn't that conservatism which you will find in your Vermont towns. I really think that Barre

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is alive and anxious to promote itself. And then too, when times are good, you will find a higher wage scale here, and naturally the people are able to enjoy themselves more freely and without worry.

But of course Barre owes its existence to granite and if you take granite away from here there would be practically nothing. I think that the young man starting in granite today feels that there is a wonderful future ahead of him. They realize just how much these new suction devises mean to the business and they feel that there is a future in granite, 4 which there certainly is. I honestly believe that those suction devises are the greatest improvement that has come into granite since its origination, that is, speaking from a health viewpoint.

About the hotel business. There are many interesting angles to it which many people are not conscious of. Now a town does not realize how important a hotel is to it. A hotel is really an institution in a community. For every person coming into the house there is money coming into Barre. If we take in so much from a curtain person, some store, or amusement place will take in almost double. Take the case when people visit Barre here to see its granite quarries. If they stay for two days, then they're going to be buying various incidentals such as cigarettes, tooth paste, candy, cosmetics, and so forth. This all adds up. And it means bringing new money into Barre. And if you didn't have a suitable house for these guests you would have them stopping off at some other town and that extra money which would be coming into Barre would be going into some other community. Salesmen coming here may spend from eight to fifteen dollars a day. We may get one fifth of that and the other four-fifths is going into the community. And then you take all the supplies that h otels needs. There is food, furniture, fuel, utensils which are needed in the upkeep of the house. All these are bought in the community, all of which goes to show that the money which we take in is turned over to the town. Then there is your help. We employ quite a few people to work in this house and they're all local help. And they 5 are employed the year around. You see this force cannot be changed at any time during the year because it is necessary for us to maintain a rigid service regardless of whether

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there is one person staying in the house or whether there are a hundred. And then too, we never do know when we are going to have a house filled to capacity. We must always be prepared for that.

Of course this all reverts back to granite. Take granite out of Barre and it would be like taking the Capitol out of [Montpelier?], Just as the Capital City requires a large percentage of its population to work in it, so do the granite sheds here in Barre require a large percentage of local help.

And that brings up a point regarding strikes. If you want to know just how a community is affected by a strike just look at that graph up there on the wall. Where you see that large decline was the result of the last strike. This is what happens when there is a strike. Your tourist trade begins to fall, although it is not affected too greatly. Salesmen who would ordinarily be coming here stop coming entirely because there's no business and naturally no reason for them to come. People stop buying except for bare necessities and gradually there is a standstill. That's why strikes are dreaded so much because it will set a community back for some time to come.

As for the future of Barre I really think that there are wonderful opportunities, especially for the younger people. Of course with competition becoming keener each year, it becomes necessary for various industries to become more alert and alive with their production. A fellow must keep just one jump ahead of his competitor, and he must be aware of his competitor's next move. That's what makes business function. That is why Barre is going to the front!